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STATE PLEASE PASS TO DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, DEPUTY SECRETARY
MC SLARROW

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SUBJECT: DUTCH SUGGEST INFORMAL MULTILATERAL TALKS ON
CLIMATE CHANGE

REF: THE HAGUE 2894

1. Summary: In his capacity as Minister of Environment, Pieter van Geel met with senior USG officials in Washington (November 15) to discuss post-Kyoto climate change strategy. He gave the ambassador a readout of his meetings December 6. Though the Kyoto Protocol will be in effect until 2012, several environmental conferences in 2005 will shape the debate over post-Kyoto mechanisms to curb climate change. Van Geel left Washington reassured that the U.S. is committed to UN climate convention framework principles. He believes early coordination and agreement between Europe and the U.S. on post-2012 climate change fundamentals is key to getting developing countries to negotiate and participate meaningfully in future negotiations. The Netherlands wants to host a meeting between U.S., UK, German and Luxembourg environmental officials in early 2005. At this meeting, participants would discuss a set of principles that will help set the post-Kyoto agenda. End Summary.

2. Ambassador Sobel and econoff met with State Secretary for Environment Pieter van Geel on 6 December for a readout of his November 15 trip to Washington (reftel). Van Geel went to Washington to take soundings on his ideas for "new avenues" for climate change talks. He met with EPA Administrator Leavitt, AID Administrator Natsios, CEO Chairman Connaughton, and State U/S Dobriansky. Van Geel also brought with him a formal application to the Carbon Sequestration Leadership Forum, but said the GONL had more internal "homework" to do before applying for membership in the International Partnership on the Hydrogen Economy.

3. Van Geel reported that he found his Washington meetings interesting and constructive. He firmly believes the US and Europe should begin sharing views now on what a post-Kyoto climate change regime might look like. Van Geel was struck by the fact that in his meetings there was no debate over climate change causes. He left believing that "the U.S. seems to have accepted that at least some climate change is man-made."

4. Van Geel believes an agreement in principle between the U.S. and EU countries on a post-Kyoto strategy for climate change is necessary before the larger, developing country emitters will be convinced to join the discussions. He is looking for ways developed countries can encourage, and where necessary, offer incentives to developing countries to adopt more environmentally sustainable mobility, energy, manufacturing and natural resource management. Over the past year van Geel has met with environment and development officials in South Africa, India, Indonesia, China and Brazil in preparation for his role as EU representative to the 10th Conference of Parties (COP10) in Buenos Aeries. On these visits he was reminded of developing country officials' priorities: economic growth, then environmental quality. Van Geel concluded post-2012 climate change talks should involve IFIs and development banks, as well as donor and developing countries' finance, economic and development ministries. Van Geel reiterated this point with the ambassador, specifically singling out the World Bank as an important potential partner.

5. At the end of 2005, parties to the framework convention on climate change will meet at COP11 and, hopefully, agree to the terms of reference for post-Kyoto global climate change. In preparation for this meeting, the Germans will host a conference in Bonn in mid-2005 to set the agenda for the UK COP11 summit. In advance of this COP11 preparatory conference the Dutch want to host (possibly in March) informal consultations with the US, UK, Germany and Luxembourg. The objective of this meeting would be to share opinions for the COP11 prepcon's content, the COP11 conference itself, and future post-2012 discussions. Van Geel promised a written proposal for U.S. participation in the consultations before the end of the year.

16. Van Geel said the Dutch would retain EU competence for climate change during the Luxembourg presidency. He pointed out the UK will make climate change a priority during its 2005 EU and G8 presidencies. The UK will organize a scientific conference on the dangers of global warming. They also will organize the COP11 and MOP1 (parties to the Kyoto Protocol) meetings.

17. Comment: The Dutch have indicated they are willing to work with us on a common post-Kyoto climate change strategy. We have found van Geel and, importantly, his international affairs advisor Yvo de Boer, to be pragmatic and reasonable. Van Geel has indicated to us he recognizes the limitations of Kyoto's strict national caps, and the costs those have on economic growth, especially among developing countries. We believe he understands future climate change mechanisms must be more flexible. On this point he may be able to influence his European counterparts, and serve as an honest broker between the US and EU climate officials. It would be advantageous to engage early in these post-Kyoto climate change discussions. End Comment.
SOBEL